

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A system for conveying a string of cushions comprising:
  - (a) an elongated cushion delivery duct having an inlet end and means for conveying a string of cushions from one point to another within said duct;
  - (b) means for diverting said string of cushions to a plurality of work stations;
  - (c) a separator adapted to sever said string of cushions ~~when said string of cushions is~~ within said elongated cushion delivery duct in response to a signal; and
  - (d) a controller adapted to generate a signal to control the diversion of the string of cushions and separating said string of cushions.
2. (Original) A system according to Claim 1 where the conveying means is a blower.
3. (Original) A system according to Claim 1 where the conveying means is a machine conveyor.
4. (Previously Presented) A system for conveying a string of packaging cushions comprising:
  - (a) an elongated cushion delivery duct having an inlet end, an outlet end, and at least one intermediate outlet between said inlet and outlet ends, said inlet end of said duct capable of receiving said delivered string of cushions;
  - (b) a blower adapted to establish an airflow in said duct to assist the transport of said string of packaging cushions within said duct;
  - (c) a diverter in said delivery duct adapted to move between a diverting position and a by-pass position in response to a diverter signal, wherein:

said diverter in said diverting position establishes a first flow path for said string of cushions in said duct from said inlet end through said at least one intermediate outlet of said duct, and

said diverter in the by-pass position blocks said at least one intermediate outlet to establish a second flow path for said string of cushions from said inlet end past said at least one intermediate outlet;

(d) a separator between said inlet end and said at least one intermediate outlet of said duct, said separator adapted to separate said string of packaging cushions in said duct upon response to a signal; and

(e) a controller adapted to generate said diverter signal and a cutting signal in a coordinated sequence so that said separator severs said string of cushions before said diverter adjusts from said diverting position to said by-pass position and from said by-pass position to said diverting position.

5. (Original) The system according to Claim 4 further comprising a cushion-supply machine capable of delivering a string of packaging cushions into a duct, wherein each cushion is connected to at least one other adjoining packaging cushion of said string of packaging cushions.

6. (Original) The system according to Claim 5 wherein said packaging cushions are air-filled cushions.

7. (Original) The system according to Claim 1 further comprising at least one storage hopper to receive said string of cushions located below said diverter in said conveying means.

8. (Original) The system according to Claim 7 further comprising a sensor to generate a signal to said controller indicating when said hopper needs additional cushions and to automatically fill said hopper with packaging cushions.

9. (Currently Amended) The system according to Claim 1 ~~said diverter~~ further comprising a tension ~~release~~ relief gate located in said conveying means coordinated to hold the string of packaging cushions before the cushion-supply machine's feed cycle.

10. (Original) The system according to Claim 1 further comprising one or more additional intermediate outlets and one or more additional diverters.

11. (Previously Presented) The system according to Claim 2 further comprising a booster blower located in said elongated cushion delivery duct remotely from said inlet end.

12. (Original) The system according to Claim 1 wherein said separator is a knife assembly.

13. (Previously Presented) The system according to Claim 12 further comprising holding pins positioned in the bottom of said elongated cushion delivery duct following said separator to maintain said string of cushions above the bottom of said conveying means.

14. (New) The system according to Claim 4 further comprising at least one storage hopper to receive said string of cushions located below said diverter in said conveying means.

15. (New) The system according to Claim 14 further comprising a sensor to generate a signal to said controller indicating when said hopper needs additional cushions and to automatically fill said hopper with packaging cushions.

16. (New) The system according to Claim 4 further comprising one or more additional intermediate outlets and one or more additional diverters.

17. (New) The system according to Claim 16 further comprising a booster blower located in said elongated cushion delivery duct remotely from said inlet end.

18. (New) The system according to Claim 4 wherein said separator is a knife assembly.

19. (New) The system according to Claim 18 further comprising holding pins positioned in the bottom of said elongated cushion delivery duct following said separator to maintain said string of cushions above the bottom of said conveying means.

20. (New) A system for conveying a string of packaging cushions comprising:

(b) an elongated cushion delivery duct having an inlet end, an outlet end, and at least one intermediate outlet between said inlet and outlet ends, said inlet end of said duct capable of receiving said delivered string of cushions;

(b) a blower adapted to establish an airflow in said duct to assist the transport of said string of packaging cushions within said duct;

(c) a diverter in said delivery duct adapted to move between a diverting position and a by-pass position in response to a diverter signal, wherein:

said diverter in said diverting position establishes a first flow path for said string of cushions in said duct from said inlet end through said at least one intermediate outlet of said duct, and

said diverter in the by-pass position blocks said at least one intermediate outlet to establish a second flow path for said string of cushions from said inlet end past said at least one intermediate outlet;

(d) a separator between said inlet end and said at least one intermediate outlet of said duct, said separator adapted to separate said string of packaging cushions in said duct upon response to a signal;

(e) a controller adapted to generate said diverter signal and a cutting signal in a coordinated sequence so that said separator severs said string of cushions before said diverter adjusts from said diverting position to said by-pass position and from said by-pass position to said diverting position; and

(f) a tension relief gate adapted to hold the string of cushions at a selected time.

21. (New) The system according to Claim 20 wherein said selected time is during the fill cycle of a cushion supply machine.

22. (New) The system according to Claim 20 wherein said selected time is before the feed cycle of a cushion supply machine.

23. (New) The system according to Claim 20 wherein said selected time is while the separator severs the string of cushions.

24. (New) The system according to Claim 20 wherein said tension relief gate is located in said duct.